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TABLE-CLOTH, CUTWORK WITH BOBBIN EDGING
Italian, Venetian, XVI Century

THE BULLETIN OF THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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IMPORTANT ADDITIONS TO THE LACE COLLECTION

The most important accession of the year 1920 in the Decorative Arts Department was the purchase in December of a two-fifths share of the well-known Ida Schiff Lace Collection of Florence. This was made possible through the generosity of J. H. Wade. The collection as a whole was divided into three parts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art securing a two-fifths, equal to the Cleveland Museum's share, while the remaining fifth was bought by a private individual for presentation to a third museum. All lovers of old lace are indeed to be congratulated that the collection has thus found a final resting place where it will be preserved for the future and made available for the study of the more serious student, as well as for the pleasure of thousands.

It is an interesting fact that Elisa Ricci used the Schiff collection again and again for reference in her book "Old Italian Lace." No fewer than seventy-five of the actual pieces illustrated in that work are included in the Cleveland Museum's share. There are four hundred and thirty pieces in all in the collection, so that the proportion of illustrated pieces is striking.

J. H. Wade in 1914 formed the nucleus of a study group through the gift of the Thomas Wilson collection. These laces were exhibited in 1920 for the first time since being remounted and catalogued, and were mentioned in an article in the October *Bulletin*. Now by one purchase there has been added a group of early bobbin laces which will make The Cleveland Museum of Art's collection of these early types probably second only in the United States to those in The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Not only is there this extraordinarily comprehensive group of bobbin laces but as well exquisite examples of cut work, reticella, punto in aria, buratto, macramé, punto avorio, punto di Milano, and the later French and Flemish laces. Such an opportunity as this comes but seldom and there is great cause for satisfaction that the purchase was so generously made possible.

The use of words meaning "lace" are often met with in chronicles and inventories of the fifteenth century but the fact is open to doubt, whether lace, as the modern world knows it, was made during these years. It is an historic fact that the use of body linen did not come into fashion till well on in that century. In early pictures where linen appears about the neck and wrists of the costumes it is either undecorated or edged with the simplest form of embroidery. As time passed on, the simplicity of this decoration did not satisfy the luxury loving nobles of the Renaissance. Some form of decoration of a more splendid and sumptuous character was necessary to go with the rich brocades, damasks, and cut velvets used in the costumes of the day. It was this incentive and the demand for lace in the household linens that governed the amazingly rapid development of the lace-maker's art.

At some period the discovery was made that threads of linen could be drawn and drawn work of a primitive type developed. Others found that by cutting slits in the linen and embroidering the edges a pleasing effect resulted, the open spaces in the design giving a variation from the monotony of solid embroidery on linen. As the experimentation proceeded the workers found that patterns of more elaborate kind could be cut and the spaces so made filled with designs in needle stitches. This was cut work, properly so called.

The possibilities of this decoration were carried further and further. Linen was cut, leaving a rectangular outline in the linen thread. These threads were covered with buttonhole stitches and the space filled with needle lace forming a beautiful scheme of decoration for towels, cloths and costumes. As long as it formed a part of the decoration for the original linen it was called cut work. But later, by development of this process the entire piece of linen was cut away leaving only a rectangular outline or net. This is the pure type of reticella, a name derived from an Italian word meaning "net." Thus it is seen that reticella was a direct derivative from cut work.

The exact date when bobbin lace developed is uncertain but it must have been contemporaneous, or nearly so, with point. The extreme popularity of reticella and cut work made it logical that the early designers of bobbin lace should

base their patterns on the same motives, as well as on the earlier braid designs. But as the possibilities of the technique were realized and the demand for and the love of lace increased, each type, the point and the bobbin, developed definite individualities of design.

The first illustration of lace in the *Bulletin* shows a superb table-cloth of the sixteenth century in which the original linen is decorated with cut work, the entire cloth being edged with bobbin lace. This charming combination of point and bobbin technique is one that was very common and is found in many of the eleven complete cloths in the Museum's share of the Schiff collection. Inside the bobbin edging there is a border of reticella, in which it is possible to clearly see how the threads of the linen were cut, leaving the rectangular space filled with needle point stitches. There is also a broad band of cut work running across both ends of the cloth. A band of punto reale or satin stitch and punto riccio or curl stitch alternates with diagonal panels of reticella in which the net-like rectangular outline is very apparent. This piece is illustrated by Ricci, exemplifying the heights of excellence to which cut work was carried.

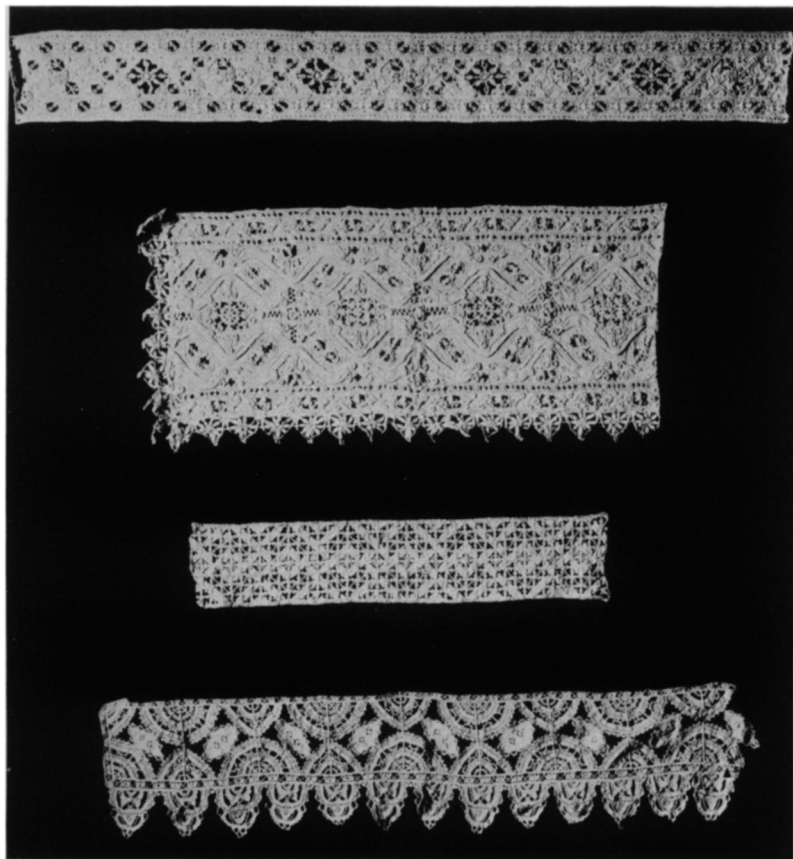
The illustrations on page 23 bring out clearly the transition from cut work through reticella to punto in aria. Punto in aria, literally a "stitch in the air" was a direct outgrowth of reticella. It was found by experience that there was no absolute need for the laborious work of cutting out the linen to form the rectangular outline necessary for reticella. Instead, the worker made his own outline in needle point stitches and the design literally grew from nothing. The first piece illustrated shows a characteristic example of cut work with rectangular openings filled with designs in point stitches and embroidered in punto riccio. The second is a very elaborate example of cut work with punto reale and punto riccio. It has an exquisite border of bobbin lace of the Genoese type. The third piece is reticella based on a cut work design. This design is taken directly from one of the famous pattern books—"La perfettione del disegno," published by Ostaus at Venice in the year 1561. It is again an example of the older designs adapted to a new technique before newer designs had completely evolved. The last piece published on this page is an

example of punto in aria but the same characteristic is present for the design is based directly on reticella motifs. The rectangular outline is retained and the delicate border of points added. In the later seventeenth century laces, the flat Venetian point, the rosaline and coraline point, this rectangular outline is completely ignored. The discovery of what could be done with punto in aria freed the lace workers from the necessity of rectangular or geometrical designs. A few good examples of these later laces in the collection show clearly this progressive development.

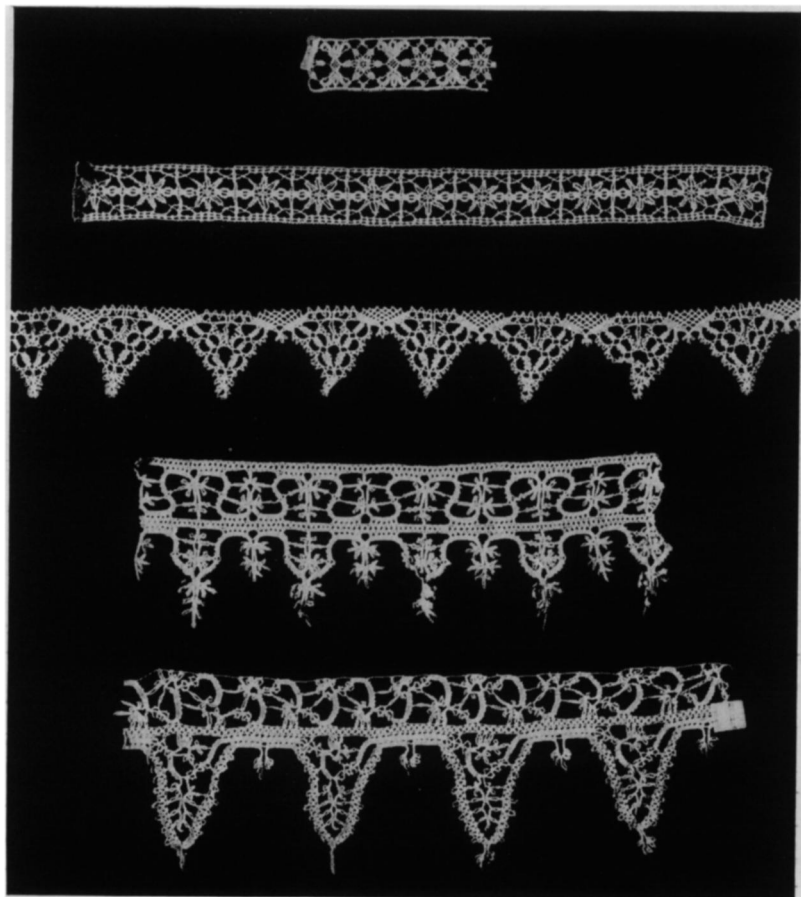
One of the most interesting features of the Schiff collection is the large number of designs of bobbin lace which can be traced to the inspiration of the pattern books published during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A great majority of these books came from Venetian presses. Perhaps the most famous was called—"Le Pompe"—The Poms, which was printed in 1557. There are a very large number of pieces in the collection which illustrate the type and designs contained in it. Other books such as "Le Teatro" and the "Studio delle virtuose dame," published by Isabetta Catanea Parasole at the very end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century show the changes in the trend of fashion. Parasole's patterns are marked by a transition from the rectangular designs of the earlier lace to the use of the curved line. In the third page of illustrations there are shown examples of Venetian bobbin lace which demonstrate these points. Among them are pieces based on reticella, others are similar to the geometric designs in "Le Pompe," and still others have the curved and flowing lines characteristic of Parasole's patterns.

One of the marked peculiarities of the Renaissance in Italy was the independence of thought among the great city states. In the basic principles of design they were affected more or less by the same general current of thought, but the individual application of ideas shows most striking differences. Venice ruled the world of taste with her cut work, reticella, and her particular types of bobbin lace but Genoa at the same time was developing a distinct and very remarkable individuality. No pattern books seem to have been published in Genoa but throughout the latter years of the sixteenth and the entire seventeenth century Genoa was par excellence the queen of bobbin laces.

CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART



1 and 2. CUTWORK 3. RETICELLA, BASED ON CUTWORK
DESIGN 4. PUNTO IN ARIA
Italian, Venetian, XVI Century



VENETIAN BOBBIN LACE

- 1 and 2. Middle of XVI Century. Based on Reticella designs
3. Designs based on "Le Pompe" Middle of XVI Century.
4 and 5. Late XVI or early XVII Century, after Parasole's design.

In the two pages of illustrations—one of Venetian bobbin (page 24), the other of Genoese bobbin laces (page 33), these dissimilarities can be studied. Many of the Genoese designs were based like the Venetian upon reticella but the use of the millet seed motif gives a distinct individuality to the patterns. The millet seed was used almost universally in Genoese lace. It is, in fact, a mark of provenance.

The last illustration in the *Bulletin* (page 34) is a section of a complete sixteenth century Genoese table-cloth. It is of the most sumptuous character, the old linen being decorated with a band of bobbin insertion and edged with bobbin points. The lace is of an *écru* color, and the contrast in the tone of the old linen with the lace and embroidery, which is also of *écru*, is extremely beautiful. Perhaps no other piece in the collection has bobbin lace of such fine quality. The design is based on geometric reticella motifs, and is striking in its delicacy and firmness of outline. This piece is also illustrated by Ricci and shows the height to which the bobbin worker raised his craft.

It is impossible in a short article to do full justice to the many pieces in the collection. Particular emphasis has been laid upon the earlier type of lace because the collection has a much greater proportion of these pieces than of the later ones. These later examples can only be treated summarily. The collection will however be exhibited in Gallery X, opening toward the end of February, when there will be an opportunity to study it in its entirety.

At the same time there will be exhibited three pieces of lace purchased at the Madame Le Fortier's sale also through the generosity of J. H. Wade. The most important is an alb of fine linen, delicately embroidered with gold and silver and decorated with a flounce of Flemish bobbin lace three yards twenty-seven inches long by twenty-four inches wide. It is a garment which would have fitted well into the brilliant ceremonials of the Spanish Church. The other pieces are a strip of Spanish lace of the seventeenth century and a Flemish Benediction veil from the end of the seventeenth century. The latter is a very important accession and is like several well-known veils which are preserved in the lace collection of the Brussels Museum.

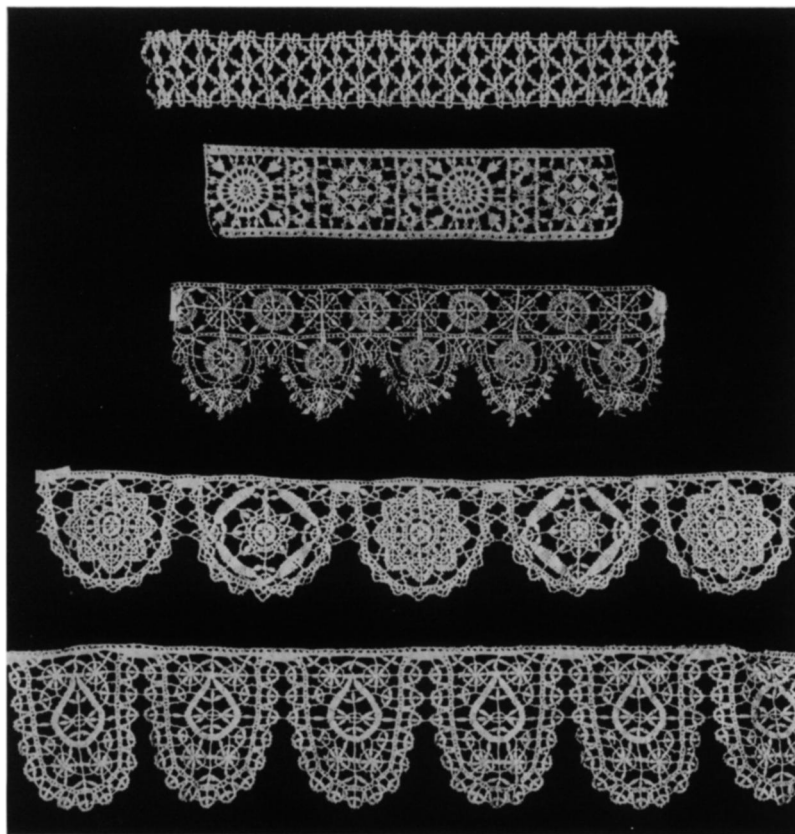
At the same sale a sheet, edged on three sides with a beautiful border of point lace was also purchased. This was presented through the kindness of Mrs. Ralph King. All these pieces will be exhibited with the Schiff collection as well as a group of lace presented by Miss Myrta L. Jones, whose continued interest has done much to build up the lace collection.

Thus it is seen that the Museum Collection of lace has reached a place where it is worthy to take rank with some of the great collections in the country. It is weak as yet in the later seventeenth and eighteenth century laces but these new accessions point the way to the future. W. M. M.

ETCHINGS AND DRYPOINTS BY FRANK W. BENSON

The position which Frank W. Benson holds among American painters of today naturally presupposes a certain following when he essays another medium to express himself. This interest, however, does not account for the unusual number of people who stop to study the exhibition of his etchings and drypoints in Gallery XI. In a showing of almost two hundred subjects, perhaps the most comprehensive survey of his etched work yet attempted, there is such vivid characterization and unflinching enthusiasm evinced that one is carried on delightedly from item to item in spite of the similarity of subject. Nothing short of marvelous seems this man's facility of handling when we consider that all of his prints have been made since 1912. Only the consummate artist could so express himself and make the performance so inevitably effective and diverting.

Born at Salem in 1862 Frank Weston Benson began his art studies at the school of Drawing and Painting of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In Paris he studied at the Academie Julien under Boulanger and Le Fèvre. He exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1885 and in the same year returned to America and settled in Salem where he now lives. He has painted many successful portraits but perhaps his studies of the figure posed in strong sunlight are most characteristic, if we except his paintings of light on rippled water and Monet-like renderings of atmospheric effects. This understanding and interpretative quality, so intensely felt



GENOESE BOBBIN LACE

1, 2 and 3. 2nd half XVI Century. Based on Reticella designs.
4 and 5. XVII Century. So-called Genoese rose lace.

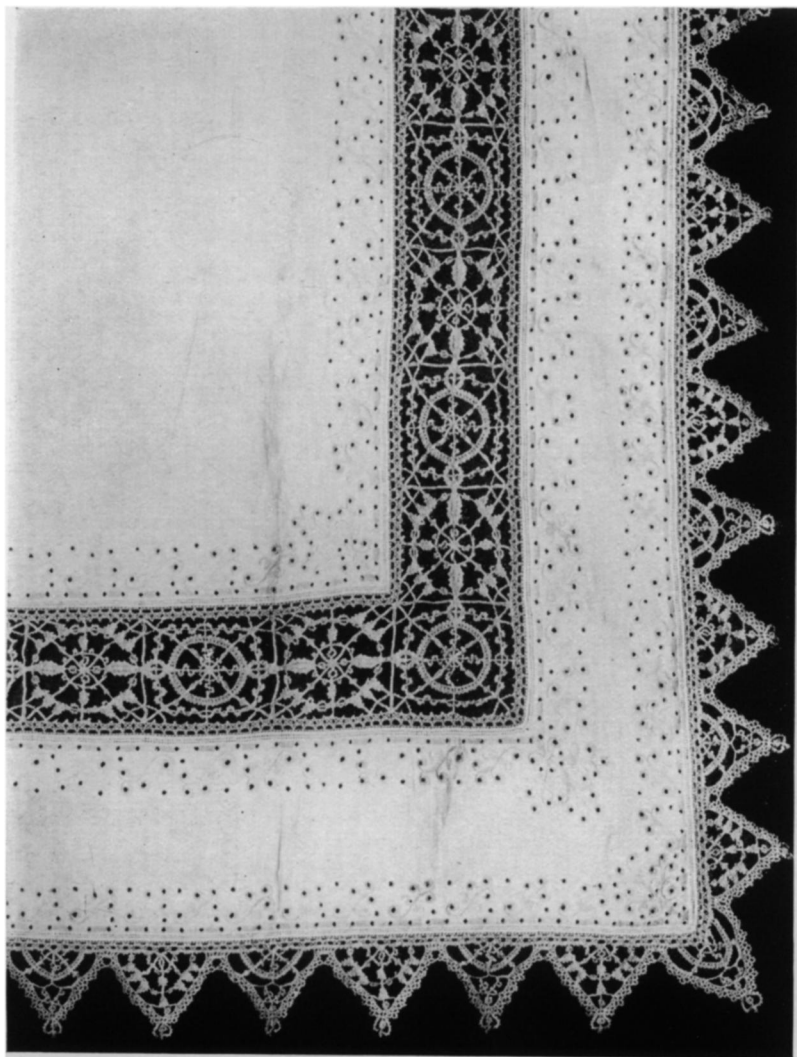


TABLE-CLOTH, BOBBIN LACE
Genoese, 2nd half XVI Century. Based on Reticella designs